# CRYPTIC INSCRIPTIONS ON THE CROSS AT HACKNESS, IN YORKSHIRE.

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ON the fragments of crosses which are preserved in the chancel of the church at Hackness, relics, doubtless, of St. Hild's foundation, there are Latin inscriptions, which appear to commemorate Oedilburga and Hwætburga, daughters of Aldwulf, King of the East Angles and nephew of St. Hild, successively abbesses of the monastery there; and of Canegyth, Bugge, and Trecea, correspondents of St. Boniface ; all of whom were living in the earlier part of the eighth century. These have been noticed in a pamphlet published by Mr. Procter, of Hartlepool ("Notes on the History of St. Begu and St. Hild"). These fragments are, however, worthy of particular notice, on account of their presenting inscriptions in secret characters, different from anything that has hitherto been observed in England. To one of them, and to a system of writing to which it appears to be allied, the present paper will be devoted; the examination of the other must be reserved for a future occasion.

The inscription in question, ofwhich a fac-simile accompanies this paper (see Plate, Fig. 1), seems to be analogous to the Ogham which occurs so frequently on monuments in the south and west of Ireland, in districts which retain their primitive character ; but there can be no doubt that it was once equally prevalent all over the island. There appear to be two distinct schools of opinion with respect to its origin, one regarding it as Pagan, the other as Christian. A desire to elucidate the Hackness inscription suggested the study of this question, the evidences on the one side—for the other has none— and the arguments on both ; an inquiry commenced, absolutely without bias towards either opinion, by the perusal of the arguments in favour of the Christian origin of the Ogham ; and the result has been a conviction of its early antiquity and Pagan origin.

The Ogham "Beithluisnion" consists of thirteen single and two double consonants, five vowels, and five diphthongs (see Plate, Figs. 2, 3), each of which is called by the name of some tree of which it is the initial :—

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B | *Beith*, Birch. | H | *Huath*, White- | M | *Muin*, Vine. |
| L | *Luis*, Mountain- | | thorn. | G | *Gort*, Ivy. |
| | ash. | D | *Duir*, Oak. | NG | *Ngedal*, Broom. |
| F | *Fearn*, Alder. | T | *Tuine*, Holly. | ST | *Straif*, Black- |
| S | *Sail*, Willow. | C | *Coll*, Hazel. | | thorn. |
| N | *Nin*, Ash. | Q | *Queirt*, Apple. | R | *Ruis*, Elder. |

1   *Hackness.*

2   3

bl f r n h d t c q m z nz st p a o u e i

ι e u o a r tt nz zm q c td h n .r. F l b

bl f r n h d t c q m z nz st p a o u e i ea oi ua ia ae

4

5

*Bressay,*

c r r o s : c c : n a d t ff dd ad d s : da t t r : ann

b e u n  r e s m e q q d d r r o a n n

| A | *Ailm*, Fir. | EA | *Eabhad*, Aspen. |
|---|---|---|---|
| O | *Onn*, Gorse. | OI | *Oir*, Spindletree. |
| U | *Ur*, Heath. | UI | *Uillean*, Woodbine. |
| E | *Eadhad*, Aspen. | IA | *Ifin*, Gooseberry. |
| I | *Idad*, Yew. | AE | |

Such are the names, with their signification, as given by Irish grammarians. Into the question—what was the original number of the letters of this scale—it seems needless to enter. All the fifteen consonants and the five vowels have been found on Irish monuments; and as far as these are concerned, it appears most probable, that their numbers and arrangement were in use when the Ogham scale was invented for expressing them in writing. But with respect to the diphthongs, it may very reasonably be doubted whether they are not a later invention, and addition to the scale. All the combinations of vowels which form these diphthongs have been found in inscriptions, except the last, which alone is nameless; so that there does not seem to have been occasion for them. On the other hand, none of the characters which represent these diphthongs have been discovered, except those which are said to represent EA and OI, and the last appears only on the very latest Ogham monument, that at Bressay, in Shetland. The former can scarcely be a diphthong, since it occurs between the vowels A and I on monuments at Dunloe and Whitefield; and indeed the identity between the names of this supposed diphthong and the vowel E, seems a sufficient reason for removing it from the series. Possibly this character may represent the letter X, which the ancient glosses at St. Gall and Wurtzburg, and the formulæ so ably interpreted by Grimm and Pictet, concur to prove, was in use in the ancient Irish language. Other characters besides these, of which the ancient grammarians knew nothing, and the value of which we have no means of ascertaining, have been found on a very remarkable monument at Kilbonane.

Here it may be well to remark, before we proceed, in illustration of the arguments that have been adduced for the Scandinavian origin of the Ogham scale on the one hand, and for its Phœnician origin on the other, that D, G, Q, NG, ST, are wanting in the Norse alphabet, though they appear in the Anglo-Saxon, and both supply TH and the letter W, which are wanting in this; that all the consonants of the Ogham scale except NG are found in the Phœnician and cognate alphabets (for Q is represented by the Phœnician and Hebrew Koph), whilst it wants the letter P, which they have. No conclusive argument, therefore, can be drawn from this source in favour of either hypothesis.

Leaving the diphthongs out of the question, it appears that this alphabet, or, more properly, "Beithluisnion," consists of four groups, of five characters each, the value of which depends on their position,

attached to the right or left of a stem, or crossing it obliquely or horizontally; and on the number of strokes, from one to five, which compose them; for inscriptions in this character (still carrying out the idea of trees) are written, not from left to right, or from right to left, as in other systems, but from the bottom or root upwards; and the stem-line is, in almost all the instances which have been discovered, represented by the angle of the stone on which they are inscribed, or by a raised ridge on its surface. On a very few, as at Callan, Killruis, and Kilcoleman, it is incised on the surface; and on a few others, as at Kinnard, it is merely ideal. At Kilcoleman, where the height of the stone did not admit of the inscription being written vertically in its whole length, the line takes a horizontal direction at the top. All these varieties of the Ogham writing appear combined on the curious monument at Kilbonane. It has two inscriptions on its angles, then an inscription attached to an incised line on its face, and this is continued apparently by a further series of characters without a stem-line, and to the right of this is another similar inscription.

Now this mode of writing is perfectly unique, and so also is the alphabet. Other ancient alphabets have their letters called by the names of objects, but none has been found in which, as in this, all the letters are systematically named after a peculiar class of objects, all called by the names of trees. Do not this nomenclature, the mode of writing in the form of a tree springing from a root, and putting forth branches on either side; as well as the designations by which the several classes of letters were known (the consonants, " taobomna," or side trees; the vowels " feadha," or trees; each stroke " fleasg," a twig), concur to show that the origin of the whole system is attributable to a race or an order, with whom trees were objects of special veneration ? Such were the Phœnicians and the primitive Greeks; such in the West were the Druids.

But this alphabet and this mode of writing tell us more than this about their origin. When the names of the letters of an alphabet are words of the language to which the alphabet belongs, it may be regarded as a presumptive proof that the alphabet owes its origin to the people who spoke that language. Thus the name of nearly every letter in the Hebrew and Phœnician alphabets has its meaning in the ancient Hebrew language[1], with which the Phœnician is now known to have been identical, whilst the names of the letters of the Greek alphabet confirm the tradition of their Phœnician origin; and those of all the letters in the Norse, Anglo-Saxon, and Gothic alphabets, are evidently Teutonic (the one exception which has been

[1] A learned oriental scholar has favoured the writer with an interpretation of the names of the characters of the Hebrew alphabet. They are such as could only have been invented by a nomad of the desert, who had no ideas beyond those of his tent, with its appurtenances, the care of his camels and oxen, and the occupation of hunting and fishing; and, as such, are decisive evidence of the primitive antiquity of this alphabet.

quoted, "Queorth," being really "Queorn," as the analogy with
"Cwairuns," of the Gothic, and "Quirun" of an old German alpha-
bet, shows). Now all the names of the Ogham scale are Irish, and,
therefore, they owe their origin to the Celtic race; but they reveal
to us, moreover, the important fact that they were brought to Ire-
land by colonists who came from a distant land, and from a very
different climate. For the names are those of Irish trees, and the
alphabet is nearly a complete list of the trees that are indigenous to
Ireland. From this it is clear that the trees were called after the
letters, and not the letters after the trees; for it would be impossible
to find in any country its catalogue of forest-trees undesignedly fur-
nished with names, the initials of which would give all the sounds
necessary to make an alphabet; and equally impossible would it be
to induce an unlettered people to give up the names to which they
had been accustomed, and adopt a new nomenclature at the bidding
of a learned few, supposing these alphabetic characters to be of later
origin. It is plain that the Irish names still in use must be those by
which the early colonists of Ireland first designated the native trees
of the country. Had they who introduced these letters been a small
colony among a people who had already given names to their trees,
they could not have forced upon them the adoption of other names.
They must then have been either the original colonists or a powerful
nation who subdued an earlier race, as the Saxons did the Britons.
Whence, then, did these come? Not, certainly, from any northern
clime, such as Britain, Gaul, or Scandinavia,—where the trees are
the same as in Ireland, else they would have called them after the
names in use there instead of after elementary characters,—but from
some more southern country. The internal evidence of the alpha-
bet, then, goes to prove that it must be referred to a race suffi-
ciently numerous to have colonized Ireland, or sufficiently powerful
to have taken possession of, and established their own literature in,
the country; who came from a southern land, and, holding trees
in special veneration, named those of Ireland after the letters of
their own alphabet. Such a race were they, to whom the inven-
tion of the Ogham has been generally ascribed, the Tuatha de
Danann. This ingenious argument, the force of which seems irre-
sistible, is borrowed from a paper by Mr. O'Daly, in the "Ulster
Journal of Archæology."

Modern philological research has thrown great light upon the
origin of the Celtic language, and its affinity with the Sanscrit is
now acknowledged. A very able writer, Mr. Crowe, in the same
Journal, has instituted a comparison between the classification of
the consonants by the Celtic bards, and the arrangement of the
Sanscrit alphabet; he has pointed out a very striking correspond-
ence between them, and shown that the only difference is in favour
of the earlier antiquity of the Bardic system; the more systematic

arrangement of the Sanscrit, which is not earlier than the seventh century, being, most probably, an improvement on an earlier system, and one closely resembling that of the Bards, which, for this reason, he argues, may have been introduced into Ireland at a very early period from the East. Hence he draws the conclusion that there is nothing improbable in the story which ascribes the compilation of the " Uraicept-na-Eigeas," or " Primer of the Bards," to Feir-ceirtne, who lived in the reign of Conchobhar mac Neasa, in the first century of our era.

Thus the arguments of two acute writers concur in referring both the alphabet and grammar to a remote antiquity and foreign origin. Now the distinction of the Beithluisnion into classes of consonants and vowels, and of the latter into broad and slender, has been used as an argument for the recent origin of the Ogham, but surely it is too much to presume that the Druids of Ireland were incapable of making this distinction. Irish traditions point to Egypt as the country, *in transitu*, of one of the races which peopled Ireland, and in Egypt at least this distinction was made in times of very remote antiquity. Plato says that Thoth, " perceiving that the inflexions of the voice of man were capable of uttering various distinct sounds, divided them into three classes, one called vowels, a second of a mixed character, and a third called mutes, and that he then separated and distinguished the vowels, the medial sounds, and the mutes, and gave to each an elementary name as a fixed part of lingual sound. What was the order of the Egyptian alphabet, or indeed of any of the primitive alphabets, Phœnician or Assyrian, Oscan or Etruscan, is not known; but here, in the West, we have an alphabet differing entirely in its order from any that we know, which cannot therefore have been derived from them, but claims a distinct and primitive origin; and of this alphabet the distinct class of vowels, and their order, form an integral part. The order of the alphabet in itself precludes the supposition of an origin subsequent to the introduction of Christianity into Ireland. Equally distinct from the Roman *a b c d*, &c., and the Teutonic *f u th o r*, &c., it can be ascribed neither to Roman nor to Scandinavian influence; and its earlier antiquity is proved by the fact that the Irish retained this order, even when Roman letters were introduced amongst them through the influence of Roman missionaries, instead of adopting that of the Roman alphabet, and rejected several of the foreign letters.

Independently of the arguments and evidences for the early origin of the Ogham, the supposition that a system of this kind could be invented by a people to whom the Roman alphabet was familiar, seems in the highest degree improbable. For it was evidently in very general use, more than two hundred inscriptions in this character having been discovered in Ireland, and as these were

written that they might be read, doubtless those who could read were able readily to comprehend their purport.

The very simplicity of this character seems to be an additional argument for the primitive antiquity we claim for it. For whilst the idea of trees appears to have suggested the form of the scale, the names of the letters and their classes ; the division of the scale into groups of five seems to have its origin in the very same idea which suggested the primitive decimal notation of numerals, i. e. the fingers of the two hands. For, in reference to the scale, it will be observed that the first group, *b l f s n*, corresponds to the fingers of the left hand, and the second, *h d b c q*, to those of the right. This theory ancient MSS. confirm, saying that the stem-line being drawn vertically, the strokes to the right were called the left hand, and those to the left the right; so also does an ancient Bardic story, quoted in the " Archæologia Cambrensis," distinctly referring to ten original or principal letters. It is as follows :—

"Einigan Gawr beheld three pillars of light, on which were visible all past and future sciences, and he took three rods of quicken, and engraved on them the signs of all sciences, that the memory of them might be preserved, and he exhibited them, and all persons who saw them misunderstood them, making a god of the rods, whereas they only bore his name. In his grief he broke the three rods, and no others were found like them. He died broken-hearted, praying to God that correct sciences, and the right understanding of them, might be vouchsafed to mankind. A year and a day after his death Menw ap y Feirgwaedd beheld three rods growing out of Einigan's mouth, which exhibited the sciences of *the ten letters*, and the order of all the sciences of language and speech. He then took the rods and taught the sciences therefrom, except the name of God, which he kept secret."

This arrangement in groups of five, thus suggested, having been adopted for the first ten letters, it was natural to combine them for the next group, *m g ng st r*. The vowels may have been at first suppressed, as in many Oriental systems of writing (and certainly some of the Irish inscriptions, as at Aghadoe and Kilfountain, have no vowels), and when it was found necessary to add them, they were represented by mere points upon the stem-line.

Mr. Crowe's testimony to the probability that the Uraicept was composed at an early period will warrant our admitting it as evidence of the existence of a tradition at that period, ascribing the invention of the Ogham to Ogma, the son of Elatan, and brother of Breas, Kings of Ireland, of the Tuatha de Danann race. Such an origin is perfectly consistent with what we learn from the alphabet itself, and when we find that the Druidic priesthood of Gaul, at the time when this tract is said to have been composed, attributed language, eloquence, and poetry to Ogmius (whom there can be no hesitation in identifying with Ogma), we have an addi-

tional reason for believing in the antiquity of the Uraicept, and in the existence of this tradition in the first century of our era, relative to one who must have lived several centuries previously.

All the Irish annalists received the tradition, and all ancient writers are agreed that the Ogham was used by the Druids for writing on monuments and on tablets of wood. The monuments exist, and although the tablets have perished, the minute and circumstantial annals that remain of many ages prior to the conversion of Ireland, which could not have been preserved by tradition alone, are presumptive evidence that the events of very early times were committed to writing.

Furthermore, whilst not a single instance is recorded in the Irish MSS. of a Christian monument inscribed with Oghams, they abound with instances of their use in Pagan times. Some of these notices are very curious, and, though the MSS. in which they occur are of comparatively late date, present the strongest internal evidence of their Pagan antiquity.

Thus, in the Book of Leinster, compiled, as Mr. Curry thinks, before the year 1150, (others think it much earlier), there is a curious tract, called " Tain bo Cuailgne," in which are several of these notices.

In one it is said that Cuchullain or Mac Beag, having made a survey of Ulster, arrived at a fort, called Dun Mhic Neachtain, and there found a stone pillar, around which an iron ring was firmly clasped, standing before the fort; and on the ring was an Ogham inscription, intimating that whatsoever warrior entered the green on which the pillar stood, was bound not to depart before he had done battle with one of the occupants of the fort. He read the inscription, grasped the stone and ring in his arms, and cast them into a neighbouring pool. Now it is remarkable that this story contains the only written notice of the ring of chivalry (the remembrance of which tradition has preserved); and here, allowing for some exaggeration to magnify the gigantic strength of the hero, may be some record of one of his daring and impious exploits, for this story is certainly of Pagan origin, and contains an account of one of the objects of Pagan idolatry. Its whole tenor is to represent the supernatural attributes of an extraordinary bull, called Donn Cuailgne, said to have been endowed with understanding; and it has been supposed that this bull was an object of religious worship, like Apis amongst the Egyptians. That the Druids did worship such a bull is extremely probable; for at St. Just, near Penrhyn, in Cornwall (another seat of the Druids), a small bronze bull was found some years ago,[1] of workmanship so rude that it may be presumed British rather than Roman. It would almost seem to be human-headed,

for the profile is decidedly human, and on the right side is the cres-
cent identifying it with Apis. That such a bull should have been
found in a country so closely connected with Ireland as Cornwall, is
a strong confirmation of Mr. O'Daly's theory that the Ulster bull
was an Apis; and the correspondence he has traced between " Ne-
achtain" and " Neton," which Macrobius records as an appellation
of Apis, or " Necht," which the hieroglyphics give as one of his
titles, seems to raise it to a certainty; and all this appears to con-
firm the tradition that the Scots were in Egypt before they came
to Ireland, so that they may have brought to Ireland, not only the
learning, but the superstitions of the Egyptians.

These identifications are certainly important, because they tend
to establish for this tract a pre-Christian origin, and so afford an
argument for the great antiquity of the Ogham.

On another occasion, this tract tells us that Cuchullain, on his
way through Machaire Conaill (Louth), entered a dense wood,
where he found a *coirthe*, or pillar-stone, and that he carved an
Ogham verse on a withe, and placed it round the stone. Now this
very place has been identified, Coirtheoll, a townland in the parish
of Kilcurley, and barony of Upper Dundalk. It is now a peat-
moss, but was once a wood.

Other notices of the use of this character are purely historical.
The same Book of Leinster contains a poem which records the death
of Cairbre Leffeachair, in the battle of Gabhra, A. D. 283, and the
raising of a stone above his grave inscribed with Ogham, in these
words :—

> " An Ogham on a stone, a stone on a grave,
> In the place where men were wont to pass,
> The son of the King of Eire was there slain."

The poem concludes :—

> " That Ogham which is on the stone,
> Around which fell the slain,
> If Finn[1] of the many battles were living,
> Long would he bear in mind the Ogham."

In the " Leabhar na h'Uidhre" there is an account of what was
placed in the grave with the corpse of Fothadh Airgtheach, who
was killed at the battle of Ollarba, A. D. 285 ; and it is added that
a pillar-stone was set up over his grave, on which was inscribed
" Eochaidh Airgtheach inso" (here).

From the " Book of Ballymote" we learn, that the name of
Fiachrach, King of Connaught, who died A. D. 380, was inscribed

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[1] He was dead before the battle

in Ogham on his monument at Hy-Mac-Uais. Such instances might be multiplied, but these are sufficient for our purpose.

It is true that these stories, as presented to us in MSS. of comparatively recent date, are far removed from the events which they record; yet it is very probable that they are transcripts of more ancient annals, or embody ancient tradition; and even tradition is not to be set aside, as the Bewcastle tradition, verified by the epitaph of King Alcfrid has shown; and, besides this, other remarkable verifications of ancient traditions have occurred, one or two of which it may suffice to mention.

When the celebrated gold corslet was found at Mold, in Flintshire, it was concluded, and it seems the only way of accounting for the fact, that the old woman who had seen an apparition of a warrior in gold armour vanishing in the cairn, twenty years before, had allowed her imagination to present to her one of whom she had heard in her youth, from the traditions of her fathers.

So, also, the silver armour of the warrior interred at Norrie's Law, in Fifeshire, is said to have been familiar to the traditions of the country.

Bishop Gibson, in his edition of the " Britannia" (1722), tells us that, not many years before, the Bishop of Derry happening to be at dinner at Ballyshannon, an old Irish harper came in and sang a song to his harp; which was explained to him, as he did not understand the Irish language, as containing a statement, that in a certain spot, which was clearly indicated, a man of gigantic stature lay buried, with plates of gold on his back and breast, and on his fingers rings of gold, so large that an ordinary man might creep through them. Here was exaggeration, as in the above cited story of Cuchullain, but still some truth; for the exact description of the place tempted two persons who were present, to go and dig for the treasures celebrated in the harper's song, and they actually found two circular plates of gold. This discovery encouraged them to go again in the morning, but whether others had been there on the same errand in the interval or not, they found nothing more. The exaggeration alluded to above was probably imputable to those who translated the song for the benefit of the Bishop, and who might have added the marvellous circumstances from their own traditional recollections, for it does not appear in what is believed to be the very song which the harper sang, and which is preserved in a MS. formerly in the possession of the late Mr. Crofton Croker, communicated by him to Mr. C. R. Smith's " Collectanea Antiqua:"—

> " On the top of Slieve Monard
>  There is a hero's grave,
>  And two gold plates enclose the warrior's body,
>  And there are golden rings on his fingers."

In the year 1813 a similar verification of an ancient bardic tradition occurred in Wales. An Anglesey farmer having occasion for stone, proceeded to demolish an ancient cairn on the banks of the river Alaw, and found within it a square cyst, containing an urn with burnt bones and ashes. The place was always known by the name of Ynis Bronwen; and two Welsh clergymen of the neighbourhood, as soon as the report of the discovery reached them, at once called to mind a verse of the " Mabinogion :"—

> " A square grave was made for Bronwen, the daughter of Llyr,
> On the banks of the Alaw, and there she was buried."

The urn, recognised as that of Bronwen, the daughter of Llyr, and aunt of Caractacus, is now in the British Museum. Where, then, we find ancient traditions thus remarkably verified, it is hard to discredit such stories as those we have quoted, speaking of Ogham monuments in Pagan times,

On the other hand, there is not a particle of evidence of the invention of Oghams at any period subsequent to the Advent of St. Patrick. For, minutely as the lives of the early Irish saints record their actions, no passage can be found in which the invention of such an alphabet as this is attributed to them. On the contrary, there is evidence that St. Patrick introduced the Roman alphabet into Ireland, and it is recorded, as a proof of his zeal, that he wrote 365 " abecedaria," as a means of making that alphabet familiar to the eyes of his disciples. These were probably on stone, as otherwise the writing of these alphabets would scarcely have been a work of sufficient importance to be recorded. Now in the churchyard of Kilmalchedor there is a stone, of which Dr. Petrie has given an engraving in his " Essay on the Round Towers," and which was undoubtedly a pillar; on which is carved a cross, the word " dn̄i," and a nearly complete alphabet (a portion of the stone, on which was the first and part of the second letter, having been broken off)— *b c d e f g h i k l m n o p q r s t u yy x.* This, if not one of St. Patrick's " abecedaria," is certainly of very early date, and may be presumed to be at least the work of one of his followers. It has evidently been cut after the word " dn̄i," and its having been written on a pillar-stone can only be referred to an age when the Roman alphabet was a novelty. Fortunately, amongst the early inscriptions which exist in Ireland, we have one of which the age is determined to be that of St. Patrick, and this is sufficient to show of what character were others of the same age which have disappeared. On Inch-a-guile (" Inis an Ghoill Craibhthigh," the isle of the devout stranger), in Lough Corrib, at Temple Patrick (which there is every reason to believe was one of the saint's foundations), there is a pillar-stone, on which is inscribed LIE LUGNAEDON MACC

LMENUEH; and Dr. Petrie identifies the person herein commemorated with Lugnadon the son of Liemania, St. Patrick's sister.

Thus St. Patrick introduced the Roman alphabet, and Roman letters were used in the inscriptions of his age; and it is worthy of remark, that almost all the inscriptions of this class are written, not as the Ogham inscriptions, from the bottom upwards, but as the Welsh and Cornish inscriptions are, from the top downwards.
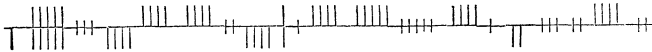
It is utterly incredible that Christian missionaries, who brought with them the Roman alphabet, and used it constantly in monumental inscriptions, should have invented another of great rudeness, have given to it the name of a hero of Pagan antiquity (and one too, who, in Gaul at least, was the object of religious worship), and then have used it exclusively on monuments of Pagan times. For the general character of the monuments on which Oghams occur, and the situations in which they are found, are no less conclusive than are the internal evidences of the alphabet itself as to their Pagan origin and primitive antiquity.

All authorities are agreed that the " dallans," or pillar-stones, were originally Pagan monuments. Near the Relig na Righ, at Cruachan, the Coirthe Dearg, or " red sepulchral pillar-stone," still remains to mark the grave of a Pagan king; and the famous " Clogh-or," or golden stone, an object of Pagan idolatry, was still to be seen, in the fifteenth century, on the right side of the church at Clogher. Many of these are inscribed with Oghams. One such stands at Ballycrovane, on a high knoll overlooking the Bay of Kenmare :—
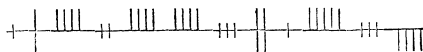


m a q    i h e    c a d d a s    a f a t o r a n    i a

Another, lying on the strand at Trabeg, two miles east of Dingle :—
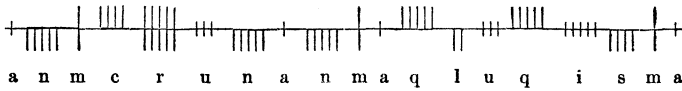


b    r    u    s    c    c    o    s    m a c    q    i    c a l    u o c    o

Again, inscriptions of this class are found on stones belonging to Druidical circles. One such at Glounaglough, near Macroom, reads :—



a m c    o    c    c    u    g    a q    u    s

And at Derreenderagh, within a circle of twelve stones, stood two, one of which is similarly inscribed :—

a n m c r u n a n m a q l u q i s m a

There appears to be no doubt that the perforated stones which are occasionally met with in these islands were connected with Pagan superstition.   One of the columns of a stone circle at Tormore, in the parish of Kilmore, Buteshire, is perforated ; so, also, is a stone pillar which stands in the centre of a circle at Applecross, in Rosshire ; and another formerly stood to the north-east of the circle at Stenniss, pierced with an oval hole large enough to admit of a child being passed through it.   At Maddern, in Cornwall, is a remarkable group of three stones, the middle one of which is pierced with a hole 14 inches in diameter, close to the ground ; and at Buryan is another, with a hole 6 inches in diameter, about 4 feet from the ground.   The character of these stones, and the situations in which they occur, seem to vindicate for them the Pagan origin which tradition ascribes to them.   Now, one of these which stands in the churchyard at Kilmalchedor, county of Kerry (where we have already noticed the alphabet stone), is inscribed on two of its angles :—

q q a s o r h i s m       h m a u l h u n i h g d
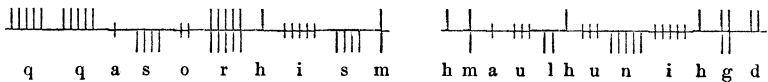
Other instances of the occurrence of these Ogham monuments are no less singular, for the Pagan character of the works in which they are found can scarcely be doubted.

At Bealahamire, county of Cork, a place thought to derive its name from Midhir, son of Daghda, of the Tuatha de Danann race, is a large oblong enclosure, encompassed with a rampart of earth, and a fosse, and within this is a smaller space, also inclosed with a ruinous fence.   This space contains several pillar-stones, and two of these are inscribed with Oghams.   There are also several subterranean chambers, and a well, called Tobar Midhir, outside the fosse.

At Ounagoppul, county of Kerry, a square heaped enclosure, or leacht, has a pillar-stone at each corner, and two of these are inscribed :—

a g o s s u q a t i a s       g a m i c u n a s
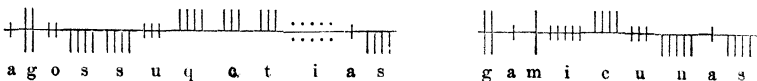
A tumulus at Ballinrannig, near Smerwick, county of Kerry, was crowned by a group of seven stones, each of which was inscribed.

A square stone formerly stood in the entrance of a fort at Coolowen, county of Cork, on the upper surface of which, in connexion with its angles, was an inscription. The situation of this stone cannot fail to remind the reader of that at the entrance of the Dun Mhic Neachtaain in the mythological tale already referred to.

Aghadoe was certainly a sanctuary of the Druids. A stone was long preserved in the church there, with the inscription :—

g g f f s s
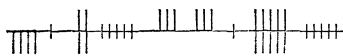
Many monuments of this kind are found in unconsecrated burial-places of suicides and unbaptized infants, called " kil."

The fact, however, that at a very early period the Ogham monuments had lost their original value, and were used as building materials, is a very decisive proof of their great antiquity. They have been found employed as the covering-stones of the subterranean chambers of raths, much of their inscriptions being concealed by their position, and even if the raths themselves are not Pagan structures, which doubtless they generally are, their antiquity is unquestionably very great. Thus, in the year 1838, a subterranean chamber was opened at Dunloe, county of Kerry, the sides of which were formed of uncemented stones inclining outwards, and the roof, of long transversed stones, six of which were inscribed, and of these three were so placed that their inscriptions could not be read. In the centre of the chamber was an upright stone, supporting a broken roof-stone, each inscribed ; the inscription on the front lintel is as follows :—

i ea a s i o f i o s o m i n am o g e l

Here there were seven of these monuments collected together as the building materials of a sepulchral chamber of very remote, if not of Pagan, antiquity.

Another stone in a rath at Burnfort, county of Cork, is inscribed :—

s a g i t t a r i

Another at Emlagh, in the county of Kerry, reads :—

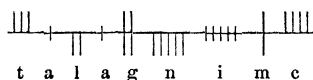t a l a g n i m c

But the most remarkable instance of the use of those monuments in the construction of buildings of a later time occurs at Ardmore, county of Waterford. There, one of those early stone-roofed oratories, of which so many exist in Ireland, remains, and it is universally regarded as having been built during the lifetime of St. Declan, a contemporary of St. Patrick, for his oratory, and as having afterwards become his tomb. In the eastern wall of this oratory there was a pillar-stone inserted in the masonry, with inscriptions on three of its angles :—

(1) l u g u d e c c a s m a q

(2) d o l a t i b i g u u s g o h

(3) c a q o m a g e c a f u q i o f
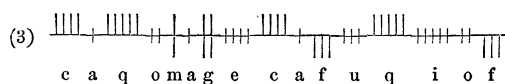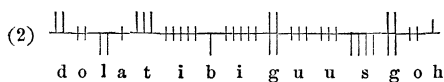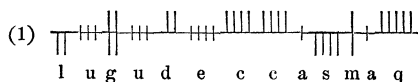
The use of this stone in the construction of a building of so early a period shows that even then it had ceased to be of monumental value.

Another, nearly square, stone built into the wall of a very ancient church at Kilrush, county of Waterford, has two lines of an inscription engraved on its face:—

f o r g e r e        r o c u m u d g a m s a
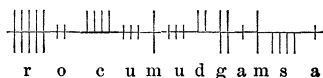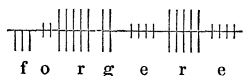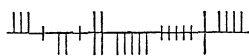
The inscribed pillar-stones which remain in this island, in Devonshire, Dorsetshire, Cornwall, and Wales, present some points of resemblance to, but at the same time others of difference from, the Irish monuments. Their inscriptions are almost invariably in the Latin language, and written in the opposite direction to that in which the Ogham inscriptions are written; and the forms of the letter appear for the most part to belong to the period of the Roman occupation of Britain.

A pillar-stone, near Padstow, in Cornwall, is inscribed in well-formed Roman letters, VLCAGNI FIL' on one side, and SEVER- on the
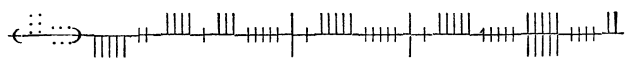
other; one at St. Clement's, Truro, has IGNIOC VITAL FIL' TORRICI; one, four miles from E. Michel, RVANI HIC IACET. With regard to the last it must be remarked, that the parish of Ruan Lanihorne, in the immediate neighbourhood, and those of Ruan Major and Minor, about twenty miles to the south-west, still bear the name of the person to commemorate whom it was erected. One at Barlowena, between Gulval and Maddern, has QVENATAV-ICDINVIFILIVS; one at Mawgan, in Meneage, CNEGVMI FIL ENANS; one at St. Columb Minor, NONE MIMOR-TRIBVN; one near Lanyen, in the parish of Maddern, IALOBRAN-CVNOVALL-II-. These are in Cornwall. In Devonshire, we have one at Tavistock, inscribed, NEPRANI FILI CONDEVI; and one at Buckland Monachorum, SARIN-FIL-MACCO DECHET-. In Wales, we have at Langian, near Caernarvon, the inscription, MELI MEDICI FILI MARTINI IACIT; and in a field, called " Doltrebeddw," on the Holyhead road, between Lima and Cernioge, BROHCMAGLI IAM IC IACIT ET VXOR EIVS CAVNE.
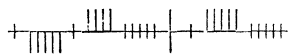
Sometimes the inscriptions on these stones are written correctly: as, for instance, CIRVSIVS HIC IACET CVNOWORI FILIVS, in which the name appears with a Latin termination; but in such inscriptions as RVANI HIC IACIT, BROHCMAGLI IC IACIT, the Latin termination is wanting, and these would seem to indicate some peculiarity of Celtic orthography. These names, and several others which might be cited, cannot be in the genitive case, as they come before the verb; and so we have no right to conclude that VLCAGNI, CNEGVMI, and NEPRANI, are in the genitive case, with " lapis" understood; they may be in the nominative as well as the rest. One of these names, TRILVNI, seems to have remained to this day almost unaltered, " Trelawney."

It is important to remark this fact, that some of these names, ending in I, occur on the Cornish and Welsh pillar-stones in situations in which they cannot be in the genitive case, because the occurrence of very similar names in the Irish inscriptions, such as—

 at Emlagh;

t a lag n i m c

 at Kilgravane;

n i s i g n i m a q i ng c b i

 at Whitefield;

(d u) n o c a t i ma q i ma q i r e d

 at Ardmore;

a n a c i m a q i

has been made the ground of an argument that the writers of these inscriptions were acquainted with the Latin languages. Names ending in I are, however, by no means uncommon in early Irish history. No one would venture to say, that Bruidi, Buiti, Mochaoi, Molaissi, Nissi, &c., are Latinized genitives; neither does there appear any reason to say it of the names in these inscriptions.

To what age do these Devonian, Cornish, and Welsh monuments belong? Mr. Westwood pronounces of several of their inscriptions, that they are not later than the fifth century, and there is nothing in the form of the letters to forbid our assigning them to a much earlier period. The interesting inscription at Dolmellynlyn, PORIVS HIC IN TVMVLO IACIT HOMO XPIANVS FVIT, must certainly belong to an age antecedent to the establishment of Christianity : else, why should the fact of his having been a Christian be recorded? And if others be Christian, as those of IGNIOC and CIRVSIVS probably are,—for we have no right to say it of them all,—we must remember that Christianity was early preached in this island, if not from the days of the Apostles, at any rate from those of King Lucius, A. D. 167, nearly three centuries before St. Patrick's labours in Ireland. These monuments, then (on which the inscriptions are in well-formed Roman characters), are not later than the age of St. Patrick, and may be much earlier. On two of them we have inscriptions in Ogham characters, besides those in Roman letters, and I believe it will be found that the former express the same names as the latter, and that the only differences will be those of the languages in which they are respectively written. The monument at Crickhowel is inscribed TVRPILLI IC IACIT PVVERI TRILVNI DVNOCATI ; that at Kenfegge, PVNPEIVS CARAN TORIVS. On the former we have a name closely resembling, if not identical with, that in the Whitefield Ogham inscription.

In Scotland four monuments have been found bearing Ogham inscriptions, and these are very interesting, for they seem to range over a period from Paganism until long after the establishment of Christianity, and fully to establish the theory that the Ogham writing had its origin in the days of Pagan antiquity, although it might be occasionally used in Christian times.

The first to be noticed is a stone pillar at Newton, in the Garioch. On this is an inscription in two lines which appears to present some differences from those in Ireland. One line is on the angle, the other on the face of the stone, and the comparative length of the latter shows that they must both be read upwards. A second inscription on this monument is written in six lines, in characters which have baffled all Scotch antiquaries, but which the late Dr. Lee (no mean authority in questions of Oriental literature), thought might be Phœnician. They certainly bear a great resemblance to

those inscriptions which have been found in Africa.   It is evident, however, that they are to be read from left to right.

The next two belong to a class of monuments which is peculiar to the north-east of Scotland.   They are marked with a variety of symbols, a walrus (as the most perfect representations of it seem to warrant us in regarding it), a fish, a dog's head, a crescent, a zigzag, a double circle, &c., and these are admitted to be Pagan.   Others have, besides these, crosses and interlaced work, and these are certainly Christian, probably of the sixth century.   Now, of the former or Pagan class is the rude stone pillar at Logie in the Garioch, marked with the double circle, zigzag, and crescent; and above these is an Ogham inscription, of a scale different from the Irish written on a circle.   No example of this kind occurs in Ireland, though it seems to be illustrated by that mentioned in connexion with Cuchullain in the Tain Bo Cuailgne.   Of the second, or Christian class, is one at Golspie, in Sutherland.   One side is occupied by a large cross, filled with, and inclosed in, interlacing and fretwork.   The other has the walrus, fish, dog's head, crescent, double circle, two serpents interlacing, and a man combating a wolf; and on the right hand, written upon the angle of the stone, and bounded by a line which two scores cross, is an Ogham inscription, which again appears to differ from the Irish scale.

Lastly, we have a monument in the Isle of Bressay, undoubtedly Christian, and probably of the ninth century.   On one side is a cross formed by interlaced ribbons; beneath this, two dogs; and beneath these, two bishops with pastoral staves.   The other side has a different cross, and two figures again with pastoral staves; between them is a man on horseback, beneath them a lion, and lower still a pig.   On the edges are Ogham inscriptions.—See Plate, Fig. 7.

These, as interpreted by Dr. Graves, are said to mean :—
1. The cross of Natdodd's daughter here.
2. Benres, of the sons of the Druid, here.

Natdodd appears to have been a famous sea-king who resided in the Faroe Islands, and accidentally discovered Iceland in the year 861.   He had a grandson called Benir, who seems to be mentioned in the second inscription, and this Benir had a daughter, Hildigunna, to whose character, as a witch, allusions occur in a story preserved in the Land-namabok—a fact which illustrates her father's patronymic, Meccu-droi.   This patronymic occurs in Adamnan's Life of St. Columba, as borne by a robber who lived in Colonsay, Erc Moccy-druidis.

It is not a little remarkable that this, the latest Ogham monument that is known, should present in its inscriptions a confirmation of what we learn from other sources was the origin of this mode

of writing, bearing witness, as it does, that the descendants of the Druids, driven from Ireland by St. Patrick and his disciples, and from Hii by St. Columba, retreating still before the Cross, preserved even to the tenth century, in the remote northern isles, the traditions of their race, and used the old Druidic writing.

These inscriptions present some peculiarities:—1. The occurrence of the character which represents the diphthong, *oi*, which is found in the Ogham scale, but has not appeared in any Irish inscription as yet. 2. The ornamental forms given to certain characters are indicative of its late date. 3. The frequent duplication of the consonants. The occurrence of the Scandinavian word *datr* need excite no surprise. Doubtless many Scandinavian words were admitted into the vocabulary of the Celtic population of these islands.

In the foregoing pages we have observed that the tree-like character of this writing, the tree names of the letters, and their classes, suggest a Druidic origin ; that the list of these names, comprehending nearly all the indigenous trees of Ireland, points to a primitive antiquity, and marks the invention of this alphabet as the work of a conquering race, such as the Tuatha de Danaan were ; and that the grammatical distinction of the letters was evidently derived from the East : that all this is perfectly consistent with the traditions not only of Ireland, but of Gaul also, relative to Ogma, with the concurrent voice of all Irish histories telling of the use of this writing in Pagan times, and with the fact of its occurrence on many monuments undoubtedly Pagan ; and that, on the other hand, the writing which St. Patrick introduced and zealously propagated, was not this, but the Roman abecedarium. All evidence, then, internal, as well as external, proves the primitive antiquity and Pagan origin of the Ogham. On the other side not a particle of evidence can be adduced ; and the arguments that have been urged for its Christian origin are, as might be expected, when the weight of testimony is so decidedly in our favour, utterly destitute of force. These, however, must be examined in detail.

It is said, then, that these Ogham monuments are marked with crosses, many of them of very antique form, and to all appearance as ancient as the inscriptions themselves. In reply to this, it may be observed, that it must be a very difficult matter to determine whether the crosses incised upon these stones are, or are not, of equal antiquity with the inscriptions near them (for in no instance has a cross been found in decided connexion with an Ogham inscription) ; and then, that what we know of the proceedings of the first missionaries in Ireland makes it far from improbable that they carved the cross on the pillar-stones which they found, as a means of placing that sacred symbol constantly before the eyes of the nation, and weaning them from the superstitious reverence with which

they regarded these monuments. We read, for instance, in the Life of St. Patrick, that he cut the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin names of our Lord,—IESVS, SOTER, SALVATOR, respectively, on three pillar-stones which had been raised by the Pagans at Magh Selga; near Elphin, and there can be no doubt, as Dr. Petrie suggests, that he would also mark them with the cross. We have already had occasion to notice the singular monument at Kilmelchedor, originally, no doubt, a Pagan pillar-stone, on which a disciple of St. Patrick, if not the saint himself, has carved a cross, the word "dñi," and an abecedarium, the symbols at once of the new religion, and of the new learning which accompanied it. At Riesk, near Dingle, there is a pillar-stone, on each side of which a cross is incised, with letters which certainly do not belong to any Christian alphabet, ꓧ ꓵ Ⲑ on one side, and ꓴꓧP on the other. In an inscription found near Carthage, the letters ꓧꓵⲐ occur in the same order, and these are the same as those of one of these inscriptions, ꓱ and ꓧ being in the Oscan and early Greek alphabets different forms of the same letter, the former of which is used in the Phœnician and Samaritan alphabets, the latter in the Roman. So, on the other side of this stone the last letter is the Samaritan, early Hebrew, and Phœnician Koph, (the Oscan equivalent of which has not yet been found), and the other two are Oscan letters. To this alphabet, indeed, all these characters appear to belong, but when the affinity between this and the Phœnician, early Greek, and other alphabets, is considered, in connexion with the resemblance which these characters bear to those of the inscriptions found near Carthage, the probability must be admitted that we have here an inscription which must be attributed either to the Phœnicians, or to those African pirates who figure so conspicuously in the Irish annals. It is certainly not Christian, and yet, on the same stone, on each side, a cross is engraved, of so simple a form that no one probably who did not know the nature of the letters would dare to pronounce an opinion which were the more ancient, the crosses or the inscriptions.

It is certain that Christian missionaries did consecrate the monuments of Paganism, not only in Ireland, but in other countries as well, by placing upon them the symbols of their faith. In Bretagne we find the cross inserted on the summit of the tall Maenhir; in Auvergne the rocking-stone surmounted by the cross. The occurrence, therefore, of crosses on a few of the Ogham stones is no ground for concluding that they are Christian monuments: on the contrary, the probability is far greater that they were originally Pagan, consecrated to Christianity in times much later than those in which they were set up. Again, it is alleged, that some of those stones bear the names of early saints, though it is admitted that those names are not found in the inscriptions. Thus a pillar-stone

at Teampul Geal, three miles from Dingle, is said to bear the name of St. Monachan. It stands near to his oratory, has a plain cross deeply cut on one of its faces, and on the angle the inscription :—

q  e  n a l  mt  i m a  q  e m a q  i a i  n  i a m u  t
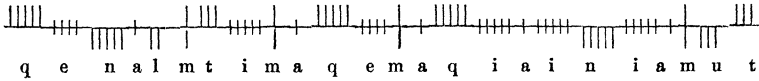
in which, of course, there is no trace of his name. If it were ever called after him, which is not now the case, it is, at least, quite as likely that it was called so because St. Monachan lived here, and carved upon the monument of some Pagan the emblem of his own faith. At Kilfountain, near Dingle, is another of these stones, on which is written the name FINTEN, the saint from whom the place derives its appellation, and a cross to which is attached the letter R thrice repeated. On the side are the Ogham equivalents of NS, which obviously have no connexion with the name on the front. What has been said of the stone of St. Monachan must be applied to this and to all others which are traditionally connected with the memory of saints. The fact of this being associated with their memory cannot be considered as any proof that they were erected by the saints whose names they bear. Further, it is said that many stand in Christian cemeteries, and others in the neigh- bourhood of cells and oratories. This is true, as it is also that they are sometimes found built into the walls of these oratories, as having been at the time of their erection of no value beyond that of build- ing materials, (just as at Hexham, in Northumberland, a Roman in- scription has been found on one of the covering-stones of a passage of St. Wilfrid's crypt); and that, with far greater frequency, they occur in places remote from Christian remains, and under circum- stances which can scarcely admit of a doubt of their Pagan origin. That Pagan monuments should be found in Christian cemeteries is not to be wondered at, for it is well known that the early missiona- ries of Christianity did take possession of the sanctuaries of Pagan- ism, and convert them into places of Christian worship. Thus Dr. Wilson, in his "Prehistoric Annals of Scotland," remarks that no reason can be assigned for St. Columba's choice of Hii, than that it had been a sanctuary of Druidism, as the name by which it is still known to the Highlanders, "Inis na'n Druidheanach," proves. So also it is related of St. Mocteus, that at the time of his coming to Louth, he found it in the hands of the Druids, that they fled be- fore him in dismay, and that he founded his monastery there. Other instances of the same kind might be adduced, but these will suffice. The missionaries of the Gospel knew well that it was in vain for them to try to wean the people from their old superstitions so long as these places remained undisturbed ; that they would still resort

2 B

to them as they had been wont to do; and so it was their policy to establish themselves in such places that they might have better opportunities of instructing them in the mysteries of the Christian faith. This was the case in England as well as in Ireland. St. Gregory prescribed that the temples of Paganism should be purified and used as churches ; and in a charter of Osric, king of the Hwiccas (Worcestershire), A. D. 676, he states that he had established monasteries in all the sanctuaries of Paganism, " ut ubi truculentus et nefandus prius draco errorum deceptionibus inserviebat, nunc versa vice ecclesiasticus ordo in clero conversantium, Domino patrocinante, gaudens tripudiet."

With this fact before us, the occurrence of Ogham monuments in Christian cemeteries, so far from being a proof of their Christian origin, makes it more probable that they mark the site of Pagan sanctuaries, where Christian missionaries fixed their abode, and built their oratories. This is known to have been the case at Aghadoe and elsewhere. In England we have a remarkable instance of a monument, undoubtedly Pagan, standing in a churchyard, at Rudstone near Bridlington, in Yorkshire; a gigantic pillar-stone, resembling the so-called Devil's Arrows at Boroughbridge ; yet no one has ever made the fact of its standing in a Christian cemetery an argument for its Christian origin. On the contrary, the name of the place, which is evidently derived from this "red stone," shows that the stone itself was in existence before the church and village, just as in the instance above cited the Clogh-or existed previous to, and gave its name to, the Christian city of Clogher. Again, it is said, that some of the inscriptions prove that they were written by persons acquainted with the Latin language. Out of the whole number, however, two only have been adduced which with any degree of probability can be asserted to be in Latin. These are the Kinnaird—
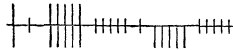
and Burnfort—
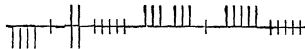
The former is read "Mariani;" but the five strokes which are supposed to stand for *i* may also stand for *uo*, and thus the inscription would read " Ma Ruoani," " the field of Ruan," and the curious device which has been compared to the ground-plan of a building might also represent enclosures and divisions of land. This reading acquires greater probability from the fact that, in very early times a person of this name was a proprietor of land, in the very barony in which this stone is situate, and gave his name to an ex-

tensive townland in the parish of Ferriter, called Tir Ruan ; and this is an exact parallel to the monument of Ruani in Cornwall, in the neighbourhood of parishes which still bear his name. In the Isle of Man, too, there is a parish called Marown, after the name of Rooney, an Irish ecclesiastic.

The Burnfort inscription reads " Sagittari," and in this, also, able scholars have discovered two Celtic words.

Granting, however, which we can well afford to do, that the Kinnaird inscription is " Mariani," the equivalent of " Maolmuire," and that the Burnfort inscription contains a Latin word, what does this prove ?  No more than what we have admitted from the first, that after the missionaries of Christianity had introduced the Roman alphabet, the older writing still continued to be occasionally used, just as Runes were in this country.  The instance which has been quoted by Mr. Westwood, of the scribe of the Duke of Bucking-ham's Irish Latin Gospel of St. John, in the seventh century, writ-ing his name in Ogham, is exactly paralleled by one which Mr. Kemble has adduced, of " Œdilflæd descripsit," written in Runes at. the end of an Anglo-Saxon MS.  These instances are, however, very few, compared with the great number that have been brought to light by the persevering industry of Mr. Windele and others ; and doubtless the antiquated and obsolete forms of the language in which these are written have proved the greatest obstacle to their being satisfactorily interpreted.  Of one word of constant occur-rence in these inscriptions the meaning can scarcely be doubted, *maqi*, or *macqi ;* and a comparison of this form with *macc* on a tombstone of an age immediately following St. Patrick's, seems sufficient to show that this is more ancient, and that the inscrip-tions are of an earlier time.

The name *Brusccos*, on the Trabeg monument, has been sup-posed to be that of a contemporary of St. Patrick, and *Moinuna* on the Ballinisteenig stone, that of a disciple of St. Brendan; but, even supposing that a probability of the identity of these persons could be demonstrated, it would but follow that these characters were in use in St. Patrick's days, and, therefore, that their origin must be referred to an earlier period, since what we know of his zeal in introducing the Roman alphabet forbids us attributing their invention to him.

Supposing that a religious motive dictated the occasional group-ing of seven stones together, nothing could be deduced from this in favour of their Christian origin, for seven was a sacred number with many Pagan nations.  It is only in four instances, however, out of more than two hundred, that groups of seven have been found ; in others we have two, three, four, five, &c., so that the occurrence of these numbers is probably merely fortuitous.

A resemblance has been imagined between the characters repre-

senting respectively *a* and *o* in the Ogham scale, and the Norse Runic alphabet, and hence it has been concluded that the former has been borrowed from the latter. This resemblance, however, does not in reality exist. The scribe of Ballymote has indeed given at the beginning of his tables two scales of Oghams, the second of which is that in which all the Irish inscriptions hitherto discovered are written, and the first (which is concluded to be the earlier) differs from it only in having the characters written vertically, as they ought to be, but separated, instead of being on a continuous stem-line. These two scales are in fact identical, for the second, if written as the inscriptions are, should also be vertical, beginning from the bottom; and this shows what the scribe of Ballymote had in view when he gave the same scale in two different ways. The fancied resemblance then disappears at once, for herein is the great characteristic difference between the Ogham and Runic systems. Oghams are always written vertically from bottom to top, Runes horizontally, almost always from left to right, sometimes standing on, or depending from a stem-line; and if occasionally we meet with a vertical line with the distinctive marks of the characters branching from it, this can be attributed to nothing but the caprice which dictated the formation of some early monograms. It is the very rare exception, by no means the rule, as in the Ogham writing, and never are more than half a dozen characters consecutively found united in this way.

The assertion, that the Anglo-Saxon Runic alphabet was invented by persons acquainted with the Roman letters, ought not to have been made without some examination of the evidence of its antiquity. The number of its letters, and their order, claim for it a primitive and distinct origin, and their names show that this origin must be sought in the ages of Pagan antiquity. Three only of the Runic letters, B, R, and I, resemble their Latin equivalents; and the s is of a form which sometimes occurs in the older Oscan and in very ancient Greek; but all the rest are wholly unlike the characters of any of the ancient alphabets.

The compilers of the Books of Ballymote and Leacan were acquainted with Runic alphabets, but merely as literary curiosities. Centuries of Scandinavian rule in Ireland must have in some degree made the natives familiar with the Norse system of writing, and Runic inscriptions may yet be discovered in Ireland, though they have not hitherto. We have a remarkable proof that the Irish in the seventh century in England were familiar with the forms of the Anglo-Saxon Runes, but were ignorant of their value, in the Gospels of St. Ceadda, one of the earliest MSS. we possess of the Irish school of Lindisfarne. The writer of this MS., in the capital letters of the first page of the Gospel of St. Mark, has used the Runes ᛗ (Stan), and ᛞ (Dæg), for P; and in those of the first

page of St. Luke's Gospel, the same characters for M. Perhaps he took the Rune ᛗ for ᛗ (Man), and ᛉ for ᛈ (Peord); but it shows clearly how confused was his knowledge of their value, that he has used both, in one instance for M, and in the other for P; yet Runic writing was not an antiquarian curiosity, but a living system in Northumbria, when these Gospels were written, for inscriptions of the time are still in existence.

Dr. Graves has given a curious alphabet, unfortunately deficient in the first five characters, discovered by Mr. Curry in a fragment of an ancient MS. in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, purporting to be an Ogham, carved by the King of Lochlin on his sword-sheath, and brought by him across the sea. It is arranged in the order of the Irish Beithluisnion, but from what has been already advanced, we must conclude that this order is derived from a source very different from that which Dr. Graves supposes. All that can be allowed is, that these characters brought from some foreign land, were arranged according to the Beithluisnion by a native of Ireland. A comparison of these characters with the Scandinavian and German Runes is sufficient to prove that they came neither from Scandinavia nor Germany, as Dr. Graves supposes they might have come, for eight out of the twenty are found in neither alphabet; but there is another Teutonic race to whom possibly they may be ascribed—the Franks. Their original alphabet is lost, but there can be no doubt that, like other Teutonic races, they had one of their own before they came in contact with Roman civilization. The alphabet, as given in the MS. above mentioned, appears in the Plate, Fig. 6. Seven of these characters, *t, m, r, a, o, e, i,* correspond with those of the Scandinavian alphabet: five others, *h, d, c, ia, ae,* have the forms, but not the values, of the Scandinavian Runes. It is, however, by no means improbable that, whilst a correct alphabet may have been brought to Ireland, the values may have been assigned to them erroneously, and that we have here an alphabet containing twelve characters which do, and eight which do not, belong to the Scandinavian alphabet. Now these characters appear on a tombstone which was found some years ago at Saverne in France. Along with it were two others, on which were more Roman letters, and near it some Roman remains—circumstances which render it probable that those monuments belong to the period when the Franks succeeded the Romans in the occupation of Gaul.[1] Of the twelve characters upon this stone (see Plates, Figs. 4 and 5), seven are identical with characters in the above alphabet; one is of the same value as, though more Roman in form than, another; and one evidently represents one of

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[1] This probability is confirmed by the resemblance of these monuments to two Anglo-Saxon tombstones, bearing Runic inscriptions, found near Canterbury.

the lost characters, so that three only are left to correspond with the four that are wanting. This shows that an alphabet closely resembling the above was in use in Gaul about the sixth century, and this probably is the source whence it was brought to Ireland.

It appears, then, that not a single fact can be adduced as an argument for the Christian origin of the Ogham, that is not perfectly consistent with the theory, which all evidence combines to establish, of its primitive antiquity.

Let us now return to the unique inscription at Hackness, which first suggested this inquiry. It is cut upon the fragment which bears the name of Trecea, and therefore must be of the eighth century. We observe, then, that although it differs from Ogham inscriptions, in its wanting their essential characteristics of the stem-line, and the vertical direction of the writing, it agrees with them in having its characters composed of simple strokes, varying in number from one to five; and of the groups thus composed there are five, two characters at its commencement, which do not belong to any of those groups, being possibly monograms. The alphabet which this inscription enables us to construct—

$$- = \equiv \overline{\underline{\equiv}} \; \overline{\overline{\underline{\equiv}}} \quad | \; \mathrm{I} \; \mathrm{II} \; \mathrm{III} \; \mathrm{IIII} \; \mathrm{IIIII} \quad ( \; (( \; ((( \; (((( \; ((((( \quad ) \; )) \; ))) \; )))) \; ))))) \quad \backslash \; \backslash\backslash \; \backslash\backslash\backslash \; \backslash\backslash\backslash\backslash \; \backslash\backslash\backslash\backslash\backslash$$

bears some resemblance to one of the Irish MS. Oghams; but it seems probable that the group of vertical straight strokes represent the vowels, and, if so, the most likely order of these groups will be

$$( \; (( \; ((( \; (((( \; ((((( \quad ) \; )) \; ))) \; )))) \; ))))) \quad - = \equiv \overline{\underline{\equiv}} \; \overline{\overline{\underline{\equiv}}} \quad | \; \mathrm{II} \; \mathrm{III} \; \mathrm{IIII} \; \mathrm{IIIII} \quad \backslash \; \backslash\backslash \; \backslash\backslash\backslash \; \backslash\backslash\backslash\backslash \; \backslash\backslash\backslash\backslash\backslash$$

Should this prove to be the case, another supposed principle of the Ogham alphabet will appear to be involved in this alphabet, for the first group will represent the fingers of the left hand, and the second those of the right. These, however, are merely suggestions thrown out for the consideration of those who may make the Ogham inscriptions, and the language in which they are written, their study. The intercourse which existed in the seventh century between the monasteries of England and Ireland, will readily account for the existence of an Ogham inscription in one of these monasteries in England. One of the inmates of Hackness, St. Begu, was certainly of Irish origin, and very probably there were others.

It is much to be regretted that this curious inscription should be so short, and so imperfect. What remains, however, is clearly cut in a very hard stone, so that there can be no doubt of the correctness of the representation of the characters here given.